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Chapter 29

Eroded Neolithic Burials, Space 1003

Lisa Yeomans

Sp.1003 refers to the Neolithic deposits recovered from eroded buildings in which there was very little preserved other than the burials that cut into the top of the more completely preserved buildings below. Their distribution provides us with information on groups of skeletons that may originally have derived from a single building. The burials also increase the sample size of human remains for study. As such, even though the burials cannot be linked to excavated buildings, they are still important. Isotope analysis of the bones indicates that the burials are similar to other Neolithic skeletons found on the East Mound. The range of the isotope values is large, however, and the sample from Sp.1003 has some of the highest and lowest values recorded at Çatalhöyük (Volume 8 Chapter 13). This may be expected as the burials are from a number of building levels and therefore will presumably have had a varied diet. The burials are discussed according to the geographical grouping in which they occur across the 4040 Area as shown in Fig. 29.1.

Burials above Building 82

(Fig. 29.2 Harris matrix on CD)

Four burials were cut into the roomfill of B.82, Sp.229. The infill of this building was mixed and contained midden infill layers suggesting there was no intention to build directly over the building after its abandonment. The position of the burials cutting into this infill supports this interpretation, as if a building following the same layout had been constructed over B.82, then one of the burials would be close to the southern wall and the oven. The burials do, however, form a group that could arguably have represented the burials from one building even if this was not built immediately after B.82.

F.1201 is the burial of an adult (7523) in the crouched position, lying on its right side with the head to the west. As the burial was close to the surface, much of the body had eroded away. The right hand was well preserved under the left with the arms flexed; no grave goods were present.

Burial F.1204 contained an adult (7537) placed on its left side in a crouched position and oriented in a northwest to southeast direction. The arms and legs were tightly flexed. Only a small portion of skull survived. Due to the proximity to the surface, the upper layer of the bones are extremely weathered and affected by root damage. A stone ball object

was found near the pelvis and was probably an intentional grave good (Fig 29.3).

The remains of two bodies in the same location formed F.1249, with the two skeletons (8822) and (8840) – both children – buried northwest to southeast with the skulls upright. The other bones of the burials were badly disturbed and eroded; no grave goods were found. Individual cuts for the two burials could not be identified and an additional tooth from a third body was found in the fill surrounding the bodies. This feature probably represents multiple burials that have become mixed, as the bones of one skeleton were displaced by the interment of an additional body.

Burials above Building 52

Two burials cut through the infill of B.52 from a later eroded building. In the infill of Sp.90 in the northwest corner of B.52 was the burial of a neonate (10282) F.1572. Cutting through the northwest corner of Sp.291, another neonate (10333) F.1588 was found buried on its side. Both of these burials respect the walls of the underlying building, B.52, suggesting that there would have been an additional level of building above B.51 (a later rebuild of part of B.52) that roughly followed the same plan.

Burials above Space 84

A series of burials cut the northeast corner of the roomfill of the building above Sp.84. Sp.84 has not been excavated but from the surface scrape it appears to have the same layout as B.77 to the north with a main eastern room and a smaller western side room. The burials cutting the roomfill of Sp.84 would therefore have probably been buried under the northeast platform of an eroded building that followed the same layout.

Burial F.3089 contained the remains of a child (16474) approximately four to six years in age. This juvenile skeleton was found in poor condition, buried on its left side in a tightly flexed position. This burial had been partially truncated by later interment F.3088, an adult female (16465) whose skeletal remains were in poor condition close to the surface. The body was on its left side in a tightly flexed position.

Slightly to the north of the inter-cutting burials is F.6065

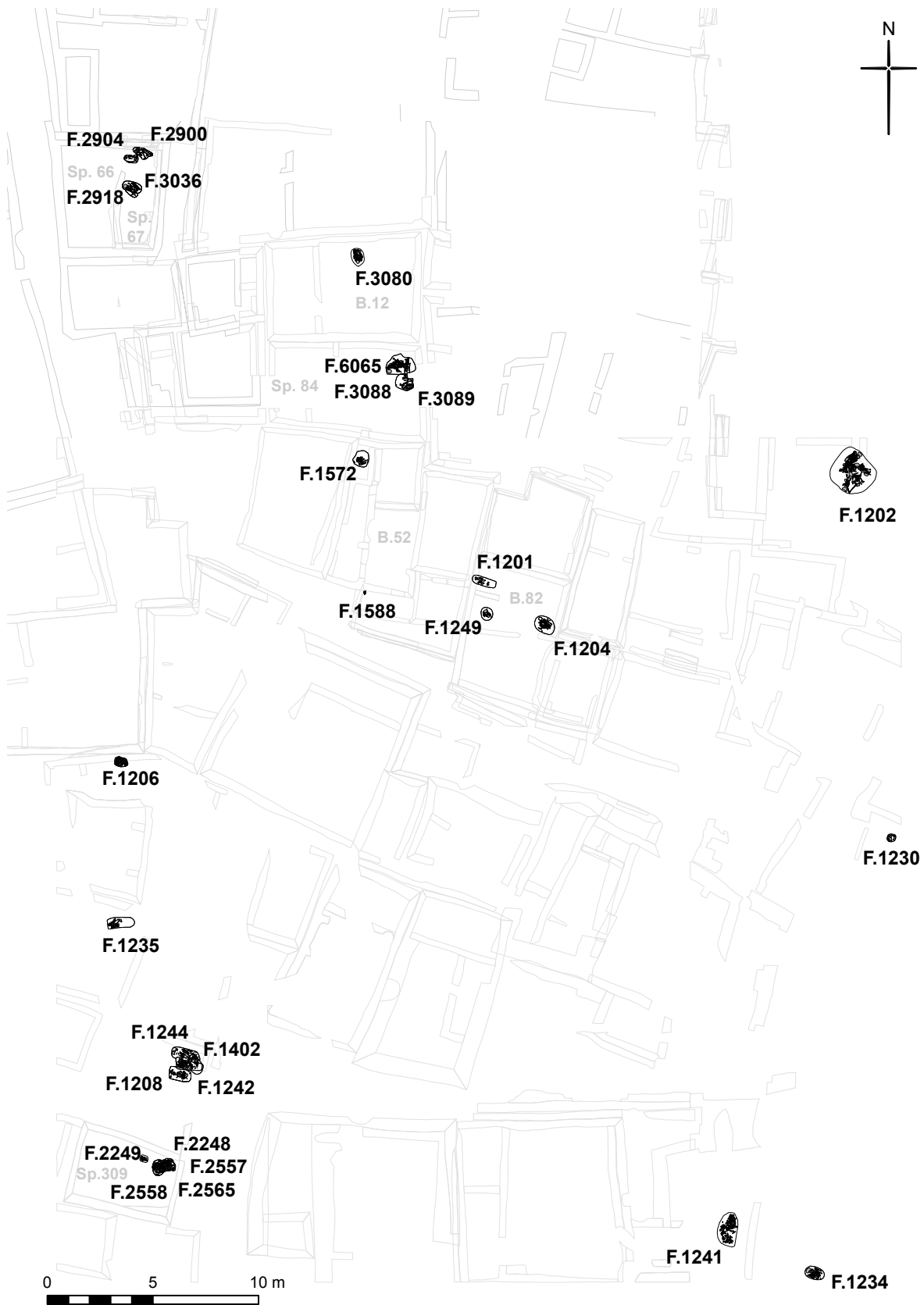


Figure 29.1. Plan showing the distribution of eroded Neolithic burials (Plan by Camilla Mazzucato, Cordelia Hall and David Mackie).



Figure 29.3. Stone ball found close to the pelvis of skeleton (7537) (Photo by Jason Quinlan).

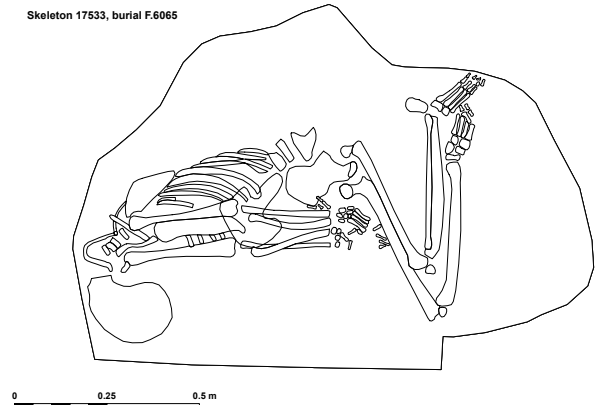
containing the skeletal remains of six individuals badly affected by erosion. It was not possible to fully understand the sequence of the interments but the remains of a neonate (17545) were overlain by a child (17546). A further neonate (17548) and an infant (17549) approximately nine months of age were buried. A later interment of an adult male (17533) overlay the remains of the previous four burials. This skeleton lay on its right side with the head to the west. The body was semi-flexed with the legs bent at the knees and placed under the torso in a kneeling position. A layer of red ochre was present under the cranium. It is possible that the layer of red ochre was placed by the side of the body and the head was pushed onto it during the disturbance. The last burial in the area is that of an adult female (17536) which disturbed the remains of the earlier burials (Fig. 29.4). This female was lying on her back in a semi-upright position with the legs drawn up to the chest. The skeleton may have been placed in a sitting position, leaning onto individual (17533). The body was oriented east-west with the upper body to the west. The head was missing and its absence may be due to intentional removal during Neolithic times or, less likely, this may be the result of erosion. Both arms were on the abdomen and flexed at the elbow.

Burials above Building 77

One burial F.3080 located over the outline of B.77 has been allocated to B.12. This building survived as two basal courses of mudbrick only, representing walls F.3082 to the north, F.3083 to the west, F.3084 to the east and F.3085 to the south. Burial F.3080 contained an adult female skeleton (16411) buried on her left side in a crouched position. This skeleton would have been located on the northeast platform of the eroded building.



Skeleton 17533, burial F.6065



Skeleton 17536, burial F.6065

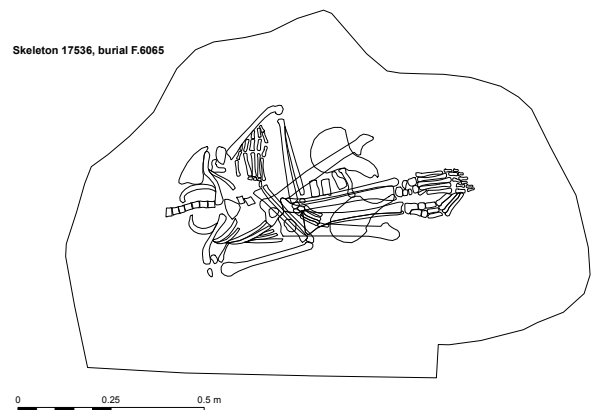


Figure 29.4. Adult female skeleton (17536) with skull removed lying over an adult male skeleton (17533) (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

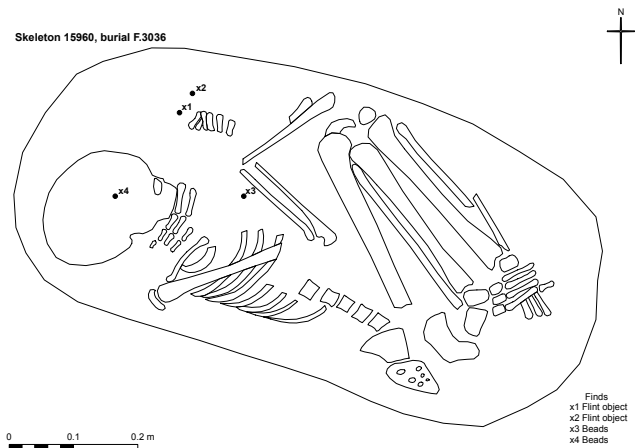


Figure 29.5. *Skeleton (15960) (Photograph by Başak Boz).*

Burials above Space 67

To the northwest of Sp.84 the western side of a structure Sp.67 was excavated for the shelter foundations (Chapter 30). Three burials and a disarticulated leg were found close to the surface of the mound in very poor condition. Their location in relation to the underlying building placed them in the northeast quadrant of the building where a platform was housed in Sp.67.

Due to the very heavy surface disturbance to these remains it was not possible to tell whether all in this group are Neolithic in date but their allocation to Sp.1003 is based on their apparent flexed positions.

Burials F.2900 and F.2904 were found close to the surface cutting through infill (15687) of Sp.67. Burial F.2900 represented the very poorly preserved remains of a skeleton (15657) in an apparently flexed position, lying on its side and face down. Close by the skeleton (15658) of burial F.2904 was also in extremely poor condition and heavily fragmented. However, enough of the sciatic notch on the hipbone was present to suggest this was likely a male. The adult skeleton was in a flexed position lying on its left side. The head was indicated by some loose teeth and occipital fragments only, the fragmented arms lay under the body and the legs were flexed tightly against the body. These two burials were in apparent association with a layer of heavily desiccated plaster, possibly the floor to an eroded building. Another skeleton (15960) found in burial F.3036 was laid on its left side in a tightly flexed position (Fig. 29.5). The head was damaged and incomplete due to exposure at the surface of the mound and the flexed arms and legs close to the body. Two pieces of flint and two beads (15960.x1-x4) were found in association with this burial. A single articulated leg (15952) of F.2918 was found above burial F.3036. Whilst representing another burial, it is impossible to allocate this to the Neolithic assemblage with any certainty due to the incomplete nature of the remains.

Burials above Space 309

The roomfill in the northeast corner of Sp.309 of B.88 had also been cut by multiple Neolithic burials from the level of a higher eroded building. The earliest of the burials is the heavily disturbed skeleton of an adult female (14167) F.2565. The location was subsequently used to inter a child (14104), F.2249 and an older male (14139) F.2558; the burial cuts for these two individuals truncated the primary burial. Only the torso of the child (14104) and right arm of the burial survived *in situ*, with the rest of the skeleton truncated away (Fig. 29.6). The adult (14139) was interred in a crouched position lying on the right side (Fig. 29.7); phytolith remains identified on the lower vertebrae and arms bones suggest some sort of binding around the body. The skull of the adult had later been disturbed or intentionally removed from the burial.

The next two bodies to be interred in this location are a juvenile (14108), F.2557 (Fig. 29.8) and a heavily disturbed neonate (14109), F.2248. The juvenile (14108), aged 15–17 years at death, was buried in a tightly crouched position lying on its right side with the skull missing. As with skeleton (14139), the skull may have been removed intentionally, although there was one loose skull fragment that might have belonged to either of the two skeletons or possibly other skeletons in the burials.

The subsequent burial is the interment of an older adult female (14102) (Fig. 29.9). She had been buried with an armlet/bracket containing several bone and shell beads and lay on her left side in a crouched position. Two neonates (14101) and (14107), both of which were lying on their backs, marked the end of the sequence.

Isotope analysis of three of the skeletons ((14167), (14104) and (14102)) supports the suggestion that the burials located over the area of Sp.309 may have derived from one eroded building. The isotope values indicate that the individuals had a comparatively similar diet (Volume 8, Chapter 13). The posi-

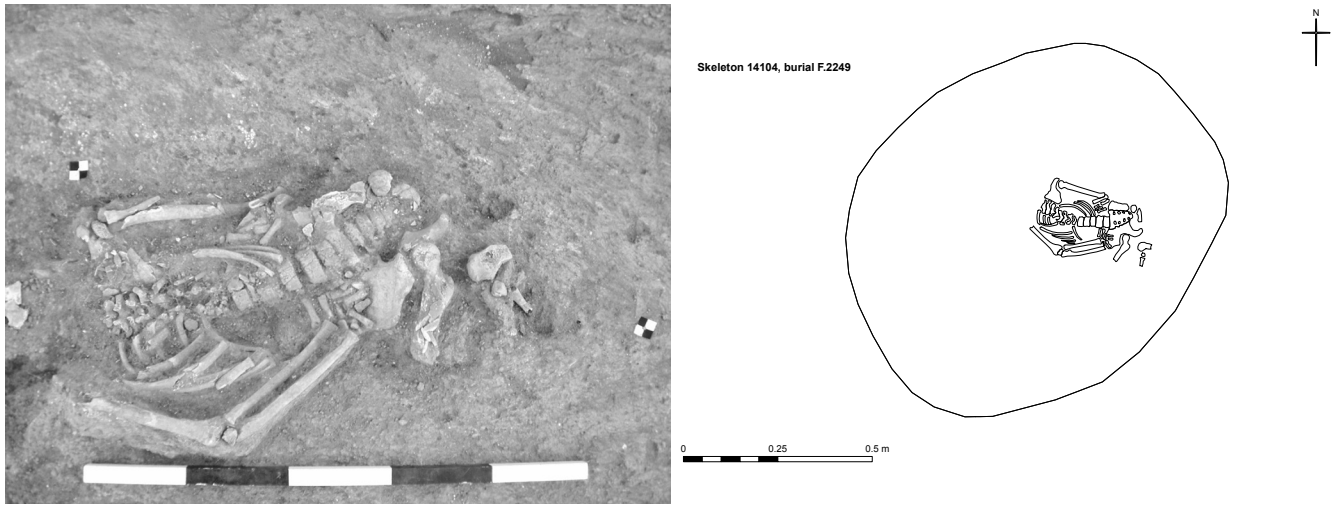


Figure 29.6. Child skeleton (14104) heavily truncated by the burial of a later old male skeleton (14139) (Photograph by Başak Boz).

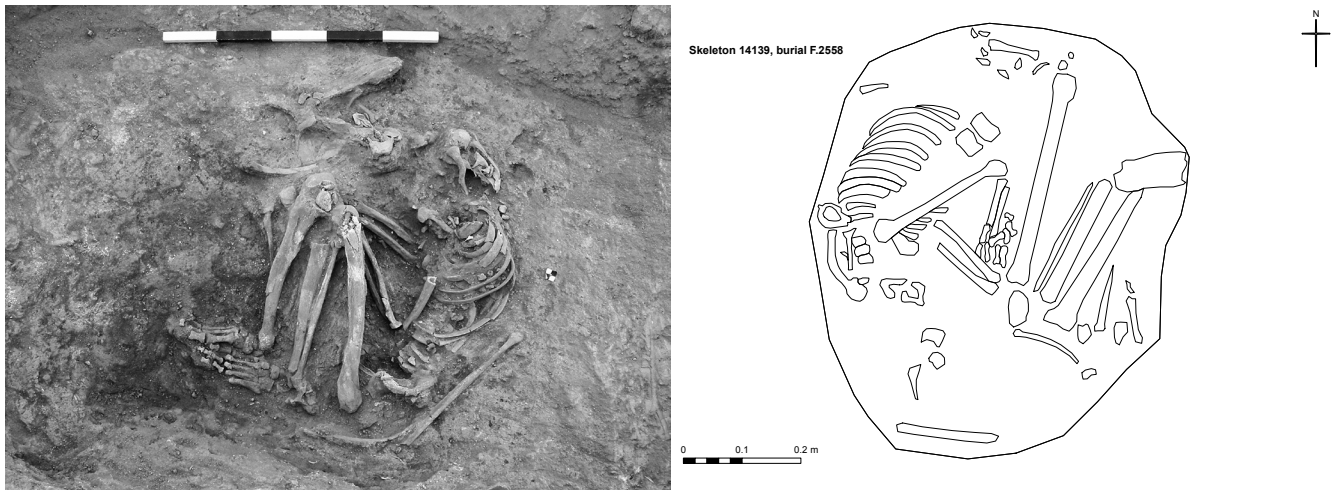


Figure 29.7. Older adult male skeleton (14139) with head removed (Photograph by Başak Boz).

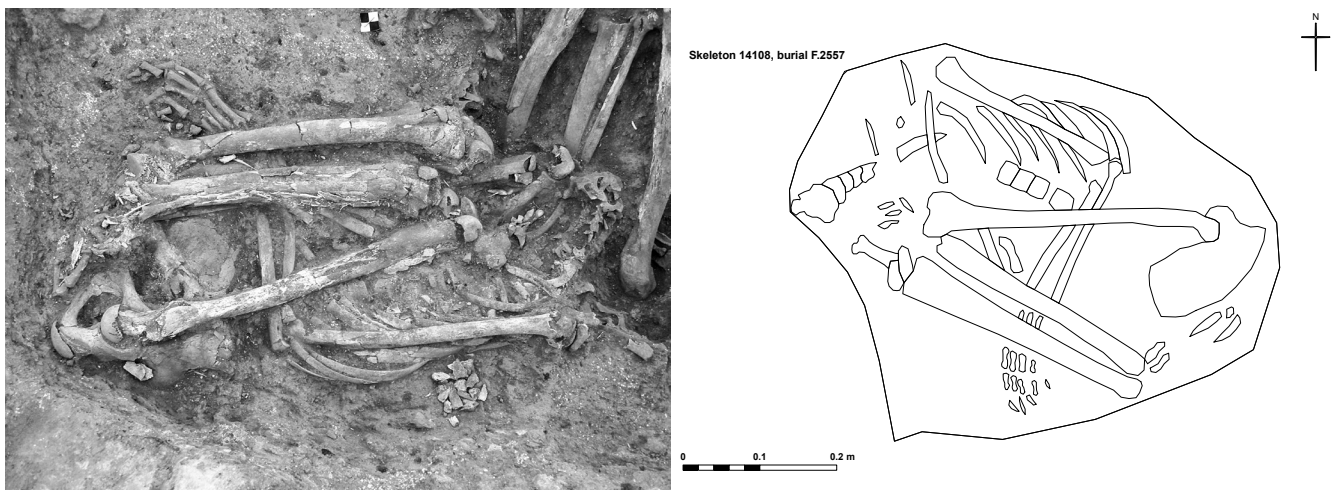


Figure 29.8. Tightly flexed juvenile skeleton (14108) with head removed (Photograph by Başak Boz).

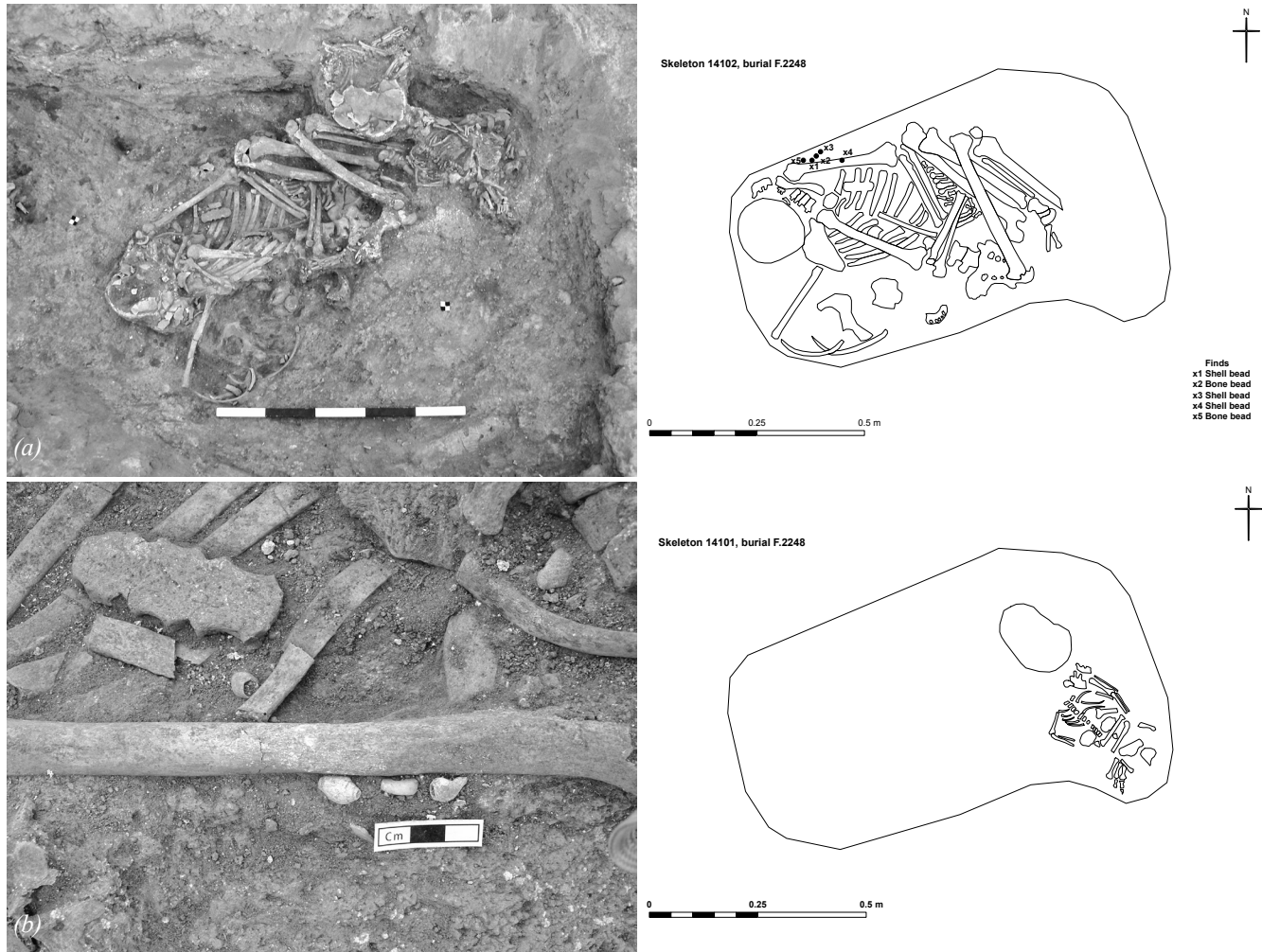


Figure 29.9. (a) Older female skeleton (14102) buried in a crouched position and two later burials of neonates (14101) and (14107); (b) close up of shell beads next to the humerus of skeleton (14102) (Photographs by Başak Boz).

tion of these burials must represent a change in the alignment of buildings between B.88 and the buildings whose occupation corresponded to the burials, as Sp.309 is a store room and the burials truncating its fill are typical of burials found in the main rooms of buildings. This group of burials is atypical, however, in that two neonates were buried with the older individuals, as well as the numerous adults and juveniles.

Burials above space to north of Space 309

Cutting the infill of the unexposed room to the north of Sp.309 were Neolithic burials, indicating that two locations were used for multiple interments. In F.1208, skeleton (7598) is an adult female that disturbed two earlier very disturbed skeletons (8718) and (8729). The female individual (7598) was lying on its left side, oriented west to east and the head was facing east with the body loosely flexed. The arms were

in front of the body and the hands were under the legs, which were bent at the knee at a 45° angle. Not all the body parts were represented and the bones are very fragmented. A blue pigment cluster and some beads were also found within the burial. All that remains of skeleton (8718) is the mandible of an adolescent lying within the burial cut; a few teeth of a child represent skeleton (8729).

The second area where multiple interments F.1244, F.1402 and F.1242 occurred cutting the infill of the same space respected the northern and eastern walls. The earliest cut contained the disturbed remains of many skeletons (8813), (8836), (8837), (8838), (8841), (8842), (8843), (8848). Although numerous individuals were present in the fill, the most articulated body was skeleton (8813) and it was probably for this burial that the cut was dug. The bone is in very bad condition and it was difficult to separate into different skeletons. Skeleton numbers were mainly assigned to skull/mandible elements in order to provide some estimate of the number of



Figure 29.10. *Geometric stamp seal 8813.x1 found close to distal femur of skeleton (8813) (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).*



Figure 29.11. *Cluster of worked bone, beads and clay balls. (7541) (Photographs by Jason Quinlan).*

individuals, since these elements preserve better and can be aged more accurately. Some of the skeletons may have been split between more than one unit number but there seems to be between five and seven individuals present, representing both adult, sub-adult and juvenile skeletons. The latest burial (8813) probably heavily truncated earlier burials and parts of these ended up in the burial fill. Skeleton (8813) was buried with a stamp seal 8813.x1 (Fig. 29.10), an elongated, rectangular stone bead 8813.x2 and a small stone bead (8813.x3). The stamp seal was located between the distal femur (8813) and under a rib suggesting that it may have been placed between the head and knees of a crouched burial. Other finds found in the burial fill that could not be directly associated with individual skeletons were found in a concentration suggesting they were buried in a groups, perhaps within some form of perishable container. These include two bear teeth and worked stones, a bone ring pre-form, a worked bone fork, another stamp seal and a number of beads (Fig. 29.11). This burial was subsequently truncated by the interment of F.1402, skeleton (8821) which is that of an adult female lying on her left side, facing north. The body appears to have been lain on a mat and yellow pigment covered almost the entire surface underneath the body. The latest burial in the sequence

of interments is (8807), F.1242. The burial position of this adult skeleton was unclear and was very severely affected by erosion. Numerous grave goods were found in the fill of this burial, including turquoise beads, a drilled obsidian bead 8807.x10, an amber bead and a stone pendant.

Burials in the northeast corner of the 4040 Area

A large number of inter-cutting burials were excavated in the northeast corner of the excavation area. At least 11 individuals were recovered from this feature (F.1202) but excavation was not completed and the area where the burials were located was never returned to. The alignment and position of the underlying Neolithic buildings is not as clear as the other parts of the excavation are after the removal of the topsoil, but the feature does appear to cut the northeast corner of an unnumbered structure. The skeletal remains in the feature are partial and probably represent bits of burials moved to accommodate more interments. More complete skeletons include an adult male (7543), an adolescent male (7541) and an adult female (7580). There is some stratigraphic information concerning which parts lie over



Figure 29.12. Shell beads found around the legs of skeleton (7541) (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

which, but the large area covered by the feature (approximately 4m by 4m) means that many of the skeletal parts have no stratigraphic relationship. A number of the individuals were associated with artefacts, mostly randomly located beads but some were also clearly together.

Skeleton (7541) is an adolescent male which was partially disturbed but lying in a crouched position with tightly flexed arms and legs. The left foot of the skeleton had been moved and placed over the legs. A concentration of shell beads was found around the legs (Fig. 29.12) and a green pendant was found by the neck.

Skeleton (7543) is a nearly complete adult male found lying on its back leaning forwards almost in a sitting position. A green pendant was recovered from under the chin and three beads were found on the abdomen, probably originally on the left arm. One of these stone beads was shaped like a claw and perforated at one end (29.13).

Skeleton (7542) is represented by an articulated adult right arm with a stone bead bracelet at its wrist. The disarticulated arm lay above the skull of skeleton (7543) immediately below the topsoil.

Skeleton (7544) is represented by a fragmentary adult skull. An adult skull and several cervical vertebrae is all that comprises skeleton (7545), these were positioned next to the skull of skeleton (7541).



Figure 29.13. Stone bead 7543.x3 in the form of a claw (Photo by Jason Quinlan).

An adult female skeleton (7577) is represented by the pelvis, both femora and lumbar vertebrae lying in articulation in a prone position.

A disarticulated skull of a seven to eight year old child lying over an articulated arm is all that remains of skeleton (7576). The skull was on top of the femur of skeleton (7577).

Skeleton (7581) is comprised of a juvenile pelvis and two femora lying next to each other; the bones had been disturbed, however, and the femoral heads were not positioned in the acetabulum.

Lying over skeleton (7581) was another juvenile pelvis and femora of skeleton (7578). The pelvis and upper legs were in articulation and in the prone position.

Skeleton (7579) is comprised of a skull of a four to five year old child lying on its right side and facing southwest.

Skeleton (7580) is a partially disturbed adult female skeleton lying on its right side and oriented northwest to southeast. The upper arms were stretched towards the west and the lower arms were missing. The vertebral column and the pelvis were present, but both legs were missing. A stone armband 7580.x2 was found on the left humerus (Fig. 29.14), an unidentified wooden object, a lump of malachite and a string of beads were found under the chin.

Skeleton (7557) is an adult female consisting of the left bones of the torso articulated with the left pelvic bone and the left upper arm and proximal parts of the lower arm. A copper armband 7557.x1 was found around the left humerus (Fig. 29.15).

Skeleton (8776) represents the lower body of an adult female with the left leg also missing. The body lay on its left side. Skeleton (8777) is a partial adult torso found lying on its front. Skeleton (8778) is an adult articulated leg. Skeleton (8800) is an adult articulated lower leg with shell beads found in association.

The fills within the burial feature contained numerous artefacts that could not be associated with an individual skeleton.

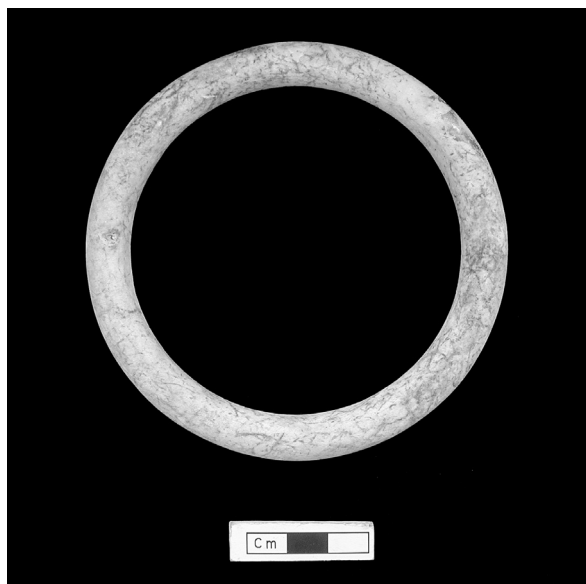


Figure 29.14. Stone armband 7580.x2 found on the left humerus of skeleton (7580) (Photo by Jason Quinlan).

eton. The upper and lower fills ((7512) and (7575), respectively) were divided arbitrarily in order to provide horizontal control over the fill deposit. The lower fill contained numerous stone beads, a bone hairpin 7575.x16, an interlocking bone bead, copper beads 75755.x17 and some shell beads. The upper fill contained numerous stone beads, a fake red deer canine bead 7512.x16, two authentic red deer canine beads (7512.x5 and 7512.F4), a boar's tusk pendant 7575.x6 and a projectile point 7512.x24.

The Neolithic date of the multiple interments forming F.1202 is called into question by the presence of a beaten and folded copper bracelet and the copper beads (see Volume 9 Chapter 17). A number of the other distinctive artefacts, however, have parallels with artefacts found in secure Neolithic contexts. These include the interlocking bone beads, the fake red deer canines, a claw-shaped stone bead and a stone armband. Small fragments of native copper have been found in the Neolithic deposits and it is possible that this group of burials dates to the Late Neolithic levels or possibly the transitional Neolithic to Chalcolithic period.

Other Neolithic burials

Some of the Neolithic burials could not be assigned to possible building groups based on the architecture below. In F.1206, a flexed adult skeleton (7531) lying on its left side was found under the remains of a badly eroded plaster surface. This is probably all that remains of the platform into which the burial was interred. Further burials below were not excavated.



Figure 29.15. Copper armband 7557.x1 found on the left humerus of skeleton (7557) (Photo by Jason Quinlan).

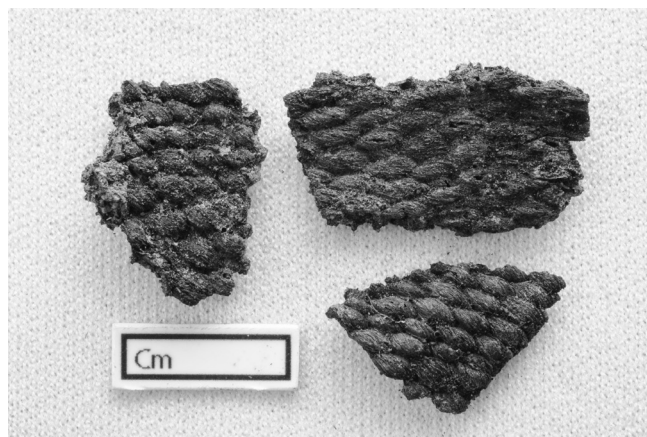


Figure 29.16. Carbonized textiles 8769.x3 found with skeleton (8769) (Photo by Jason Quinlan).

In burial F.1235, the skeleton (8769) of a disturbed adult female skeleton was found partially crouched in the prone position. Some carbonized textile remains 8769.x3 were found around the body (Fig. 29.16).

F.1234 contained the burial of a crouched adult (8757). The body was on its left side and the bones were very fragmentary.

F.1230 contained the fragmentary remains of a child (7591) in a crouched position.

F.1241 contained the remains of four very incomplete individuals. The earliest skeleton (8845) is represented solely by an articulated knee. Skeleton (8817) is a partially preserved adult female skeleton found above these remains. The body was oriented south to north and was loosely flexed on its right side; the skull and the left side of the torso were missing. This skeleton was associated with a number of stone beads. Above this was the interment of skeleton (8802), an adult female skeleton. Some parts of the body, including most of the skull, were eroded away. The body was on its back with its right arm bent at the elbow at a 90° angle alongside the body. The right hand was on the left arm which was extended alongside the body. The legs were flexed and pushed

to the left. The remains of an adult (8844), not stratigraphically linked to the other skeletons, is represented solely by an ischium and a femoral head fragment.

Acknowledgements

The majority of these burials were excavated during the scrape excavations in 2003 when the 4040 Area was first defined. Other burials were excavated in successive seasons as buildings were excavated of their fills. The 2003 phase of work was supervised by Joann Lyon and Jeremy Taylor

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